

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 NEA-10 /091 W

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R 051711Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5430

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 0822

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR US MR UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET EMBASSY READS MUCH INTO VISIT BY AF/W DIRECTOR

1. AF/W DIRECTOR THOMAS SMITH VISITED NOUAKCHOTT FROM LATE EVENING APRIL 1 UNTIL AFTERNOON APRIL 3. NOUAKCHOTT STOP WAS FOLLOW-ON TO EARLIER MEETING IN DAKAR CONCERNING AID TO DROUGHT-AFFECTED SAHEL COUNTRIES. SMITH VISIT WAS NOT REPORTED IN LOCAL PRESS, ALTHOUGH IT WAS PROBABLY MENTIONED ON LOCAL RADIO.

2. SOVIET EMBASSY PERSONNEL TOOK UNUSUAL INTEREST IN VISIT AND HAVE APPARENTLY ASCRIBED MAJOR SIGNFICANCE TO EVENT. SOVIET THIRD SECRETARY BORIS PODKOLZINE GRILLED DCM ABOUT VISIT FOR BETTER PART OF HALF-HOUR AT MOROCCAN RECEPTION ON APRIL 2. NATURE OF PODKOLZINE'S QUESTIONS SUGGESTED THAT SOVIET EMBASSY BELIEVES VISIT (A) IS LINKED TO SECRETARY KISSINGER'S UPCOMING AFRICAN TOUR, (B) FORETELLS CLOSER AND WARMER U.S.-MAURITANIAN TIES, (C) SIGNALS INCREASED AID FROM US TO MAURITANIA AND (D) IS SOMEHOW RELATED TO US SAHARAN POLICY. DURING APRIL 4 FILM SHOW, SOVIET AMBASSADOR STARTSEV RAISED SMITH VISIT SEPARATELY WITH AMBASSADOR AND WITH DCM. STARTSEV KNEW WHICH GIRM OFFICIALS SMITH HAD MET. HE ALSO WENT TO CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT VISIT. AT SAME FILM SHOW, SOVIET FIRST
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SECRETARY FEDOR TESSELKINE RAISED SMITH VISIT WITH ECONOMIC/

COMMERCIAL OFFICER.

3. COMMENT: SOVIET AMBASSADOR CLEARLY TASKED HIS PEOPLE TO LEARN AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ABOUT NOUAKCHOTT VISIT BY AF/W DIRECTOR. IN SPITE OF OUR PROTESTATIONS TO CONTRARY, WE BELIEVE SOVIETS CONTINUE TO ATTACH FAR MORE SIGNIFICANCE TO VISIT, AS IT CONCERNS US-MAURITANIAN RELATIONS, THAN SITUATION MERITS. WE SUSPECT THAT SOVIETS, AFTER REVIEWING US POLICY ON WESTERN SAHARA, HAVE CONCLUDED WE ARE SUPPORTING MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA. CONSEQUENTLY, IT IS ONLY NATURAL, IN THEIR VIEW, THAT SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL SHOULD CONSUMMATE "NEW RELATIONSHIP" WITH GIRM OFFICIALS. HANDYSIDE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION, VISITS, AFDROUGHT, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NOUAKC00822
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760128-0210
From: NOUAKCHOTT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760496/aaaadexb.tel
Line Count: 75
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 MAY 2004 by CollinP0>; APPROVED <02 SEP 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET EMBASSY READS MUCH INTO VISIT BY AFW DIRECTOR
TAGS: PFOR, US, MR, UR, (SMITH, THOMAS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006